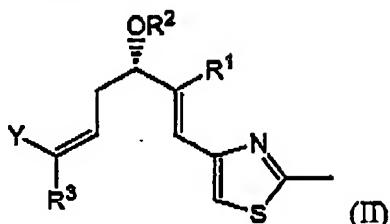


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claims 1-58 (Cancelled)

59. (New) A compound of formula II



wherein

R^1 is C_1 - C_4 alkyl,

R^2 is benzyl, p-methoxybenzyl (PMB), trimethyl-silyl, 2-(trimethylsilyl)ethoxymethyl (SEM), tetrahydropyranyl, methoxymethyl, benzyloxymethoxymethyl, benzoyl, or acetyl,

R^3 is hydrogen or C_1 - C_4 alkyl,

Y is CO_2R^4 , CHO , $CH=CH_2$ or CH_2R^5 ,

R^4 is C_1 - C_4 alkyl or an optionally substituted benzyl group,

R^5 is halogen, hydroxy, p-toluenesulfonate or $-OSO_2B$, and

B is C_1 - C_4 alkyl or C_1 - C_4 perfluoroalkyl.

60. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein

R^1 is C_1 - C_4 alkyl,

R^2 is p-methoxybenzyl,

R^3 is methyl,

Y is CO_2R^4 , and

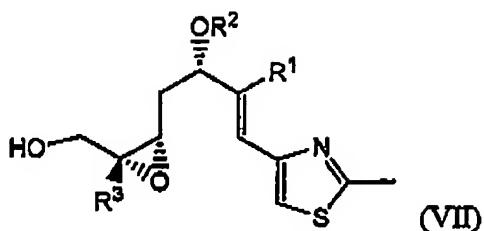
R^4 is C_1 - C_4 alkyl.

61. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein

R^1 is C_1 - C_4 alkyl,

R^2 is p-methoxybenzyl,
 R^3 is hydrogen or C_1 - C_4 alkyl, and
 Y is CO_2 -ethyl.

62. (New) A compound of formula VII



wherein

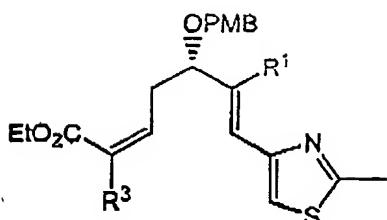
R^1 is hydrogen or C_1 - C_4 alkyl,
 R^2 is benzyl, p-methoxybenzyl (PMB), trimethyl-silyl-2-(trimethylsilyl)ethoxymethyl (SEM), tetrahydropyanyl, methoxymethyl, benzyloxymethoxymethyl, benzoyl, or acetyl, and
 R^3 is hydrogen or C_1 - C_4 alkyl.

63. (New) A compound of formula VII according to claim 62 wherein

R^1 is hydrogen or C_1 - C_4 alkyl,
 R^2 is p-methoxybenzyl, and
 R^3 is hydrogen or C_1 - C_4 alkyl.

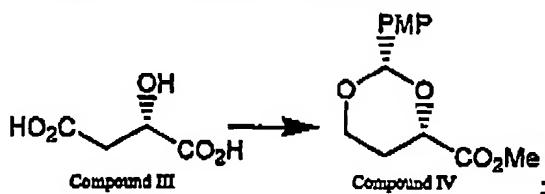
64. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein R^4 is C_{1-4} alkyl or a benzyl radical which is substituted by an electron-donating substituent.65. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein R^4 is C_{1-4} alkyl, p-methoxybenzyl or 2,4-dimethoxybenzyl.66. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein R^5 is bromine or iodine.67. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein R^1 is CH_3 .

68. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein R³ is CH₃.
69. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein R² is p-methoxybenzyl (PMB).
70. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein Y is COOR⁴.
71. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein Y is CO₂-Ethyl.
72. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein Y is CH₂R⁵.
73. (New) A compound according to claim 62, wherein R³ is CH₃.
74. (New) A compound according to claim 62, wherein R² is p-methoxybenzyl (PMB).
75. (New) A compound according to claim 62, wherein R¹ is CH₃.
76. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein said compound is (5S,2Z,6E)-2,6-Dimethyl-5-[(4-ethoxyphenyl)-methoxy]-7-(2-methylthiazol-4-yl)hepta-2,6-dienoic acid-ethyl ester.
77. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein said compound is (5S,2Z,6E)-2,6-Dimethyl-5-[(4-methoxyphenyl)methoxy]-7-(2-methylthiazol-4-yl)hepta-2,6-dienol.
78. (New) A compound according to claim 59, wherein said compound is (5S,2Z,6E)-2,6-Dimethyl-2,3-epoxy-5-[(4-methoxyphenyl)-methoxy]-7-(2-methylthiazol-4-yl)hept-6-enol.
79. (New) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula IIa

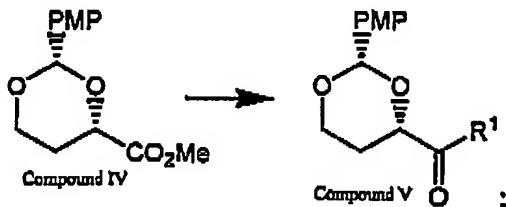


comprising:

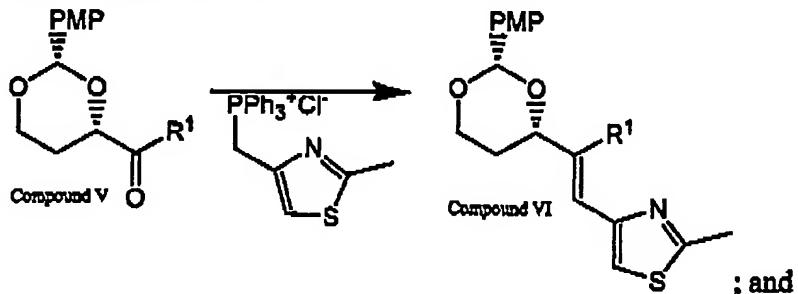
converting the *alpha*-hydroxy acid function with trifluoroacetic acid/methanol of (S)-maleic acid (III) to methyl ester, reducing the still present acid function with diborane in tetrahydrofuran to alcohol, and converting the (S)-(-)-methyl-2,4-dihydroxyester that is obtained with *p*-methoxybenzylidemethylacetal to the cyclic acetal (IV),



converting the methyl ester with a C₁-C₄ alkyl-organometallic compound to obtain the corresponding alkyl ketone (V),



reacting the (C₁-C₄) alkyl ketone (V) in a Wittig reaction with the thiazolylphosphonium salt, and separating the E-isomer (VI),



converting the E-isomer (VI) by reaction with diisobutylaluminum hydride, by Swern oxidation, by Wadsworth-Homer-Emmons condensation with ethyl-2-diethoxyphosphinylpropionate or by treatment with a Horner reagent that corresponds to R³,

and/or by purification of E-isomers to the Z- α,β -unsaturated ester (IIa),

